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ABSTRACT

Good classroom management not only increases the amount of time students spend in learning but also reduces the time teachers spend supervising routine activities and helps to prevent discipline problems. Recent research on effective management practices suggests that the following factors are particularly important: (1) planning; (2) routines and rules; (3) attention to students' needs; (4) transitions and pacing of lessons; (5) monitoring student behavior; and (6) mode of instruction. References are included. (Author/JW)

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Spring 1981

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Classroom Management

A Review of Practice-Oriented Research

Classroom management is a matter of concern to all teachers, regardless of the subject matter or grade level they teach. The term refers generally to the teacher's ability to organize students, time and instructional materials so that students will stay on-task and learning will take place.

Good classroom management not only increases the amount of time students spend in learning but also reduces the time teachers spend supervising routine activities and helps to prevent discipline problems.

Recent research on effective management practices suggests that the following factors are particularly important:

- Planning. Effective teachers think ahead about potential problems and make preparations to deal with them.

For example, teachers who anticipate a shortage of space for an activity in their classroom may move furniture out in advance so as not to disrupt the flow of the class. Planning ahead to the time when they may have an unexpected visitor, they may decide that their policy will be to converse inside the room where they can still monitor the class.

- Routines and Rules: Research shows that both effective and ineffective teachers have rules and procedures for regular classroom occurrences such as going to the bathroom and lining up for recess.

Effective teachers, however, express these rules in clear behavioral terms and provide feedback which not only indicates to the students how well they carried out these routines but also reminds them of the rules.

For example, a teacher might say, "I see that everyone who used the pencil sharpener today remembered the rules--only two at a time and no talking while there."

In contrast, the poorer managers tend to have vague rules. These rules are sometimes introduced casually, without discussion, or are presented once and then not mentioned again. As a consequence, the children are frequently without enough information to guide their behavior.

Researchers conclude that effective managers view desired student behaviors as a set of skills to be taught while ineffective ones seem to view the control of student behavior as depending on their authority and the students' willingness to cooperate.

- Attention to Students' Needs: Teachers who are effective managers are also proficient at diagnosing students' needs for information, at knowing what is likely to be confusing and distracting for students, and at focusing students' attention on the work at hand.

For example, studies show that these teachers pay attention to what students say; check regularly on students' progress and adjust instruction accordingly; give clear indications of when an activity is starting or stopping; and arrange seating so that students face the area in the room on which they are to focus.

- Transitions and Pacing of Lessons: The ability to run smooth, well-paced lessons with few student-initiated interruptions has been shown to be another characteristic of effective classroom managers.

In order to avoid student interruptions, for example, these teachers may set aside specific times for students to seek teachers' help and make sure that students know what to do when they finish their work.

They may also assign one or more students

to help others who are unclear about an assignment, or write assignments on the board so that students can double check them.

• Monitoring Student Behavior: Teachers who continually keep track of student behavior by regularly moving around the room or seating themselves so that they can easily scan most of the class have been shown to have higher student achievement than those who do not.

Monitoring can deter misbehavior or help the teacher decide the best time to stop misbehavior that occurs. According to the literature, the likelihood of children acting disruptively is negatively correlated with the likelihood of their being seen by the teacher. Furthermore, if teachers know exactly what is going on when misbehavior begins, they can intervene to stop the misbehavior before it escalates or spreads to others in the class.

• Mode of Instruction: Effective classroom managers are aware that different settings for instructing students (such as whole class sessions or individual seatwork) influence difficulty or ease of monitoring student misbehavior and student attentiveness.

During whole class recitation in which the teacher is the main source of instruction, the dual demands of class management and instruction make it difficult for the teacher to monitor the class.

In seatwork periods, however, monitoring is simpler. Since the teacher does not have to play a central role in instruction, he or she may easily pay attention as needed to an individual student or a subgroup of students without halting the activity of the whole class.

In sum, many of the management techniques examined in this report serve to reduce the amount of time a teacher spends supervising routine activities. These techniques can also help to prevent discipline problems by minimizing the time students spend in transition from one activity to another--the time during which discipline problems have been shown to be most prevalent. More importantly, effective classroom management contributes to increased student learning by maximizing the amount of time students spend on academic tasks.

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This Short Report is based on a new publication, Classroom Management and Learning in Elementary Schools, written by Janet Bowermaster of the ERIC/EECE User Services department. This publication may be ordered from the address below. (ERIC/EECE Catalog #192, 43 pp., $3.00)

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